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Agenda item 7
Adoption of the report of the Forum on its fourth session

Draft report

Monitoring progress in implementation (programme element I.b)

Conclusions

1. The Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) recognized that there are various aspects to data collection, monitoring, assessment and reporting. One aspect relates to assessing progress in implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) proposals for action in terms of existing and, if appropriate, new legislation, policies, programmes and processes. Another aspect relates to assessing trends in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests as well as the state of forests, and to make the best use of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. IFF also recognized that the national implementation of criteria and indicators and assessing progress is affected by enabling conditions and mechanisms, including financial and technical resources. The primary value and benefits of reviewing, monitoring and reporting is at the national level. Efforts should be made to make national data timely, accurate and internationally comparable, as well as transparent and accessible to all interested parties.

2. The collection, assessment, monitoring, organization, reporting and dissemination of data can involve substantial costs and institutional capacity. Therefore, efforts should be made to avoid duplication by utilizing, where appropriate, existing reporting systems of international organizations and instruments, and by harmonizing, where appropriate, existing monitoring and reporting systems.

3. There is a need to build and strengthen institutional, technical and human capacity at the national level to enable periodic monitoring of the state of forests in order to measure and report on policy effectiveness and progress towards sustainable forest management as well as to identify priority areas of action. Monitoring, assessment and reporting activities

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should be integrated into national forest programmes. Approaches to strengthening national capacities should be practical and cost-effective.

4. Cooperation, coordination and partnership among countries and between countries and organizations would assist capacity-building. In this regard, greater priority should be given by all countries to financial and technical assistance programmes and the transfer of technology to help developing countries to strengthen their capacity for reviewing, monitoring and reporting.

5. There is also a need to develop a better common understanding of key concepts, definitions and terms at both the national and international levels, as well as greater comparability of data that permits aggregation at the regional and global levels. This would assist countries in meeting the various demands for reviewing, monitoring and reporting on forests by international instruments, multilateral organizations and various regional and international criteria and indicator processes.

6. Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management are important tools for reviewing, monitoring and reporting on the state of and trends in all types of forests and for assessing progress towards sustainable forest management. Incorporating the results of criteria and indicators, for instance, in voluntary national reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) global forest resources assessment, national forest programmes reporting, and the *State of the World's Forests* reporting would provide useful bases to assess progress towards management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

Proposals for action

7. IFF recalled the IPF proposals for action that are relevant to this category (in particular, E/CN.17/1997/12, paras. 17 (g), 17 (i), 70 (e), 77 (f), 78 (b), 78 (c),115 (a) and 115 (b)).

8. IFF encouraged countries to:

(a) Prepare national information on the management, conservation, and sustainable development of all types of forests as the basis for any consolidated information on forests at the international level. [Adequate financial resources, both domestic and international, should be available for capacity-building and implementation of national reporting initiatives;]

(b) Make forest-related information for reviewing, monitoring and reporting progress in implementation of sustainable forest management widely available and accessible to policy makers and to interested groups, noting the important role that subnational levels of government and interested groups play in contributing to assessment and information gathering;

(c) Report on the implementation of IPF proposals for action in the context of reporting on forests to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eighth session, taking into account, where appropriate, the process used to assess the relevance of the proposals and priorities for action, the organizations and interested parties involved, and noting progress made and the areas where new actions could be undertaken;

(d) Further develop and implement, with the support of international organizations, as appropriate, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, and use them as a basis for reviewing, monitoring and reporting national trends in the state of forests, as well

as progress on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests;

(e) Encourage the donor community to assist developing countries in preparing national information and reports on forests, recognizing that information collection and reporting are costly activities.

9. IFF encouraged ITFF member organizations and other relevant international and regional organizations to consult with countries regarding collection and synthesis of national information in order to facilitate accurate reporting with a view to having countries verify the information synthesized, and give effective feedback on the overall results of data collection and reporting and make such information widely available and accessible to policy makers and to interested groups.

10. IFF encouraged countries, Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests (ITFF) member organizations and other relevant international and regional organizations to:

(a) Develop harmonized, cost-effective, comprehensive reporting formats for collecting and synthesizing national forest information to meet the diverse demands for reliable and timely data by various forest-related international organizations and instruments. There is a need to incorporate information on relevant criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, including indicators on environmental, social and economic functions, such as non-wood products, forest resources and services, and the competitiveness of forest products at the domestic and international levels, into such reporting formats in order to reduce reporting burdens on countries and increase the timeliness and consistency of reporting;

(b) Improve the effectiveness of coordination and partnership within countries and with international organizations and instruments as a means of building the capacity in developing countries for periodic and timely collection, review, synthesis and utilization of information related to sustainable forest management.